

The victory of the Ottomans cast the Greek speaking peoples into more than four hundred years of occupation. But even while under the yoke of Ottoman rule, the Greeks were an impressive force. As successful and educated merchants, many thrived in the Ottoman middle class and bolstered the Ottoman economy.

Still, the Greeks were not meant to be subject peoples and they began to oppose the imperial policies of the Ottoman government. Greeks, many of whom were educated in the universities of the West, began to adopt revolutionary ideas from France, Great Britain, and the United States. The concepts of the nation-state, self-determination, and liberal democracy found their ways into the Greek villages and cities from Athens to Constantinople.

On March 25, 1821, Greek patriots from the southern tip of the Peloponnese to the northern outskirts of Macedonia finally rebuked the yoke of the Ottomans and declared the independence of the Greek people from subjugation. At first, the Hellenic fighters met with violent failure, but their just cause ignited the imaginations of their people and of scores of Western philhellenes, such as the English poet Lord Byron, who left their homelands to fight and die with the Greeks for their liberation.

The United States was never far from the minds of the revolutionary Greeks, nor was the struggle of the Greeks unnoticed by Americans. As Greek revolutionary commander Petros Mavromichalis, one of the founders of the modern Greek state, said to the citizens of the United States in 1821, "It is in your land that liberty has fixed her abode and . . . in imitating you, we shall imitate our ancestors and be thought worthy of them if we succeed in resembling you."

By 1833, the Greeks had secured independence and with it a place in history as the first of the subjugated peoples in Europe to overthrow their Ottoman masters.

As the Greek nation developed and grew, it emerged as a stalwart ally of the United States. The Greek people fought alongside the American and Allied forces in both of the world wars of the twentieth century. The Greeks again took up arms against their Ottoman foes in the First World War and then handed the Axis powers their first defeat in World War II when the Greek army pushed back the forces of Mussolini. Soon after, however, they would suffer through a long and painful Nazi occupation.

After World War II, Greece became an instrumental member of the NATO alliance. Greece's strategic location made it a vital buffer between the Western Democratic world and Soviet Communism.

Over the last thirty years, Greece has made major strides forward for its people. In 1974, Konstantine Karamanlis finally restored democracy to Greece, bringing representative government back to its birthplace. Greece became a member of the European Community and the powerful European Union.

Today, Greece continues to move in the right direction thanks to the enlightened leadership of Prime Minister Costas Simitis. Greece currently has the honor of holding the European Union's rotating Presidency. It is working to promote peace and stability in Europe and the Middle East during challenging times. Greece and its Foreign Minister George Papandreu continue aggressive efforts to end generations of strained relations between Tur-

key and Greece, including actively promoting a settlement on Cyprus and helping to promote Turkey's bid for EU membership. Greece understands that a democratic Turkey belonging to the EU would serve the interests of Greece, Turkey, and all of Europe.

Economically, Greece is prospering and recently became a member of the European Monetary Union. Next year, the Olympics will finally return to their birthplace in Greece where athletes and spectators from around the world will experience the warmth of Greek hospitality.

Strategically, Greece remains important, especially to the United States. It is a force of stability in the volatile Balkans where it continues to promote open markets and democracy. The Greek government is also united with the United States in its war on terrorism. Over the last year Greek law enforcement and intelligence services have worked closely with U.S. authorities to shut down the November 17th terrorist group and its terrorist allies in Greece. Greece has made major arrests and has begun prosecuting terrorist leaders for their crimes.

I cannot overstate the importance of strong ties between Greece and the United States. As an American citizen who believes firmly in the principles of democracy and as a representative of thousands of Greek-Americans that live in Central New Jersey, I rise today in humble recognition of Greek Independence Day.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in proud recognition of the 182nd anniversary of Greek Independence. This special day for Greece commemorates the end of nearly four hundred years under the rule of the Ottoman Empire and a return to its democratic roots.

The political philosophies of both the United States and Greece have been challenged by oppressive powers, and both nations have proudly defended their right to self-government. After showing a desire to be free from the Ottoman Empire in 1821, Greece endured eleven long years of war to succeed in gaining independence. American and Hellenic cultures greatly respect their tradition of independence and recognize the importance of democratic principles.

The United States and Greece have always enjoyed a reciprocal relationship in international and cultural endeavors. Hellenic principles resonate in our culture and politics, since the United States was founded on the principles of democracy developed thousands of years ago in the city-states of ancient Greece. Hellenic influence can even be seen in the architecture of our Capitol building. Our country has also had an influence on Greece since our Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution influenced their first Constitution.

On a cultural level, I am looking forward to 2004 and the homecoming of the Olympic Games to Athens. Since Greece resurrected the Olympics in 1896, they have symbolized peace and excellence for people around the world. Greece will undoubtedly serve as a gracious host of the Games, and the 25th Summer Olympics will prove again to the world how Hellenic ideals such as equality and friendship have stood the test of time and continue to flourish at a global level. Hellenic culture, whether through its development of democratic government or from its espousal of friendly competition, encourages people to

come together amicably even during the most difficult of times.

Mr. Speaker, it would be difficult to imagine a United States of America, or even the world, without the great contributions from Greece. I will continue my work in Congress to support Hellenic causes and keep the ties between our two countries strong. I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating Greece on the anniversary of its independence.

I urge my colleagues to join me in celebrating this anniversary.

CELEBRATING GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise with my colleague and dear friend, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS), with whom we founded and co-chair the Hellenic Caucus here in Congress; and I rise with him today to celebrate the 182nd anniversary of Greece's declaration of independence from the Ottoman Empire.

As many of my colleagues may know, New York City is the home of the largest Hellenic population outside of Greece and Cyprus; and historic Queens, which I have the honor of representing, is often called Little Athens because of the large influence from Greece and Cyprus in that neighborhood.

I rise today to pay tribute along with the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) to the Hellenic American community, not only in the 14th Congressional District but in the entire country, for their many contributions to America; and also I rise to honor the Federation of Hellenic Societies, which will lead the Greek Independence Day Parade in Manhattan, again in my district, that pays tribute to the Olympic spirit.

The grand marshal this year is Senator SCHUMER, who will be accompanied by the Federation president, Apostolos Tomopoulos, and officers Petros Galatoulas, Takis Vassos, Sotirios Vahaviolos, Demetrios Kachulis, Kleanthis Meimaroglou, Stylianos Manis, Elias Tsekerides, Anastasios Stasinou, George Georgopoulos, Nikos Alegrakis, Gregory Demetroulakis, Nikos Diamantides, Vasilios Petratos, Demetrius Kalamaras, George Kaloudis, Nikos Kouzilos, along with other major leaders from Astoria and Manhattan, Konstantis Lambrakis, Elena Maroulleti, Andreas Savva, John Zapantis, Bill Stathakoss who is the honorary president, and John Spyridakis and George Razis.

Democracy traces its earliest roots back to ancient Greece and the Greeks of 1821 fought for independence from Turkey; and when they fought, they truly drew inspiration in turn from the ideals and institutions of the fledgling United States as they waged their own struggle for independence.

In the year 2003, a vibrant Greek democracy serves once again as an inspiration to its neighbors and the free world.

The recent apprehension of one of the 19 members of the November 17 terror group provides reassurance that Greece deals sternly and effectively with terrorists. That is one reason that in Greece this is considered as the trial of all trials. Certainly, there is every reason to welcome the fact that the group responsible for killing many people, including four American officials and a British general, is finally being brought to justice.

This significant contribution to the prevention of terrorism and Greece's membership to the EU will provide Hellenes with even greater stature.

The Hellenic American community shares a love of freedom, liberty, and individual rights. The friendship between our two nations is based on mutual respect, a commitment to common goals, and a sharing of fundamental values. Ties of blood and kinship also unite us. The modern community of approximately 3 million Greek Americans has established a natural and enduring bridge between our two nations.

Today, we take special note of these citizens and thank them for their many contributions to our Nation's cultural, economic, and political heritage. In the coming year we look forward to the preparations for the 2004 Olympics, which will take place in their birthplace of Greece. We also look forward to progress in the reunification of Cyprus.

The EU council said, "The EU strongly supports the continuation of the Secretary General's mission of good offices and of negotiations on the basis of his proposals." They continued that "it urges all parties concerned to spare no effort toward a just, viable and functional settlement and, in particular, the Turkish-Cypriot leadership to reconsider its position."

My desire is that this Greek Independence Day be the symbol of independence for all enslaved people. Zeto e eleftheria.

□ 1915

VACCINE INJURY COMPENSATION FUND

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, in the late 1980s, Congress passed a bill that established a Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund. It was supposed to be a nonadversarial fund that was to help children and their parents when they were damaged by vaccines.

We have found in the last few years that we have had a tremendous increase in the number of autistic children in America. We went from 1 in

10,000 children who are autistic to 1 in 200; and now many scientists and doctors around the world and in the United States believe it has been caused by mercury in vaccines.

There is a product in vaccines called thimerosal; and 50 percent of thimerosal, which is a preservative in vaccines, is mercury. Mercury causes damage to the neurologic system and to the brain; and yet we have been putting it in needles and then into our kids for many, many years, mercury which has a cumulative effect in the brain and does cause things like autism and other neurological disorders. Most parents do not know that.

When we established this fund in the late 1980s, there was a 3-year window when people could file if their children had been damaged by vaccines. Many parents with autistic children did not know about the fund until the 3 years had elapsed. We are trying to get that changed so these thousands and thousands of parents with autistic children have the opportunity to apply to that fund to get the kind of restitution that they need to take care of their kids.

Many parents have gone bankrupt, have lost their homes, have had to take extra mortgages to help with their problems, and the children are never going to be completely right. If Members saw the movie Rainman, Members know what I am talking about.

Mr. Speaker, each night I am coming to the floor and reading one of the thousands of letters I get from parents who have no place to turn except to the Congress.

This lady who wrote this letter is named Melinda Clark from Parma, Missouri. Here is what she writes:

"My family's journey down this road began a little over 3 years ago. The day of my son's diagnosis is permanently etched in my mind. I stood there frozen in the doctor's office almost as if time stood still, and I was instantly put on autopilot. It is still painful to go back to that time in my mind. It finally explained why my precious little boy no longer uttered my name or even looked into my eyes. Oh, how I longed to hear the words 'I love you,' but those were not going to come easily. It would take numerous hours of intense therapy to put together any sounds. With our backs against the wall, we immediately immersed ourselves into research and getting therapy treatment under way. While most kids his age enjoyed leisure time playing with toys and watching Sesame Street, my son began a time-intensive schedule of 40 hours a week of combined therapies. We started from scratch and had to first learn what exactly Nicholas knew and then work from there to fill in many gaps.

"As our research continued, I was quick to discover the use of thimerosal in many of my son's vaccines. Nicholas received his vaccines from both the county health department as well as the doctor's office. All in all, too much thimerosal was accumulated for his fragile immunity and nervous system. My investigation has been thwarted by the doctor's office from the beginning. As I began to put together pieces and find proof for my well-founded fears of mercury poisoning in my son, I requested the specific lot numbers as well as manufacturers' names for his vaccines in order to file a vaccine injury report. The doctor's office effectively stalled

me for many months before finally telling me that no specific records had been maintained. I could not believe my ears. This was their legal, not to mention ethical, obligation to their patients' safety and welfare. Without this specific information, I was never able to officially report the injury, but it is my sincere hope that through this letter my story can be told. Nothing can be done to undo the damage done to my son, but I pray that no other family will have to suffer at the hands of our ignorant use of mercury in these vaccines.

What sickens me even more is I worked in an environmental lab where we would test for this toxin in parts per billion, and no one ever mentioned to me during my son's vaccines that this toxin was being used as preservative. As an intelligent human being, if given the opportunity and knowledge of being told this chemical was contained in his vaccines, I never would have allowed this poison to be injected into my child.

Then it goes on and tells how horrible it was as she saw her child slip away from her and does not pay attention or look at her any more.

It is difficult for those who are not personally affected to understand or even acknowledge the truth. We have been trained from early on to trust in our government and follow all the guidelines set forth for vaccine safety. Like many others, I used to have that trust. Now my vision has been greatly blurred as the blame and acceptance of this issue has been set aside time and again. It is time for our country to step forward and do what is right. No other family should have to walk this stony path when it can easily be avoided by the complete removal of all mercury in all vaccines. The monetary loss of dumping these vaccines is a small price to pay. My son is now 6, and he is doing as well as anyone can expect.

Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of these children who have been damaged by mercury in vaccines, and here are a few pictures of some of these children. We need to adjust the Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund to take care of these kids. We cannot leave them and their parents high and dry. It is absolutely criminal for this Congress not to deal with this issue.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TAX CUTS AND SPENDING PRIORITIES NEED NOT BE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, when the House considered the Republican budget last week, there was a lot of debate regarding whether the President's tax cut proposal was coming at the expense of other obligations, obligations to pay for child care, for public schools, college loans and nutrition programs that help children get a good start in life.